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The Mosaic Distinction: Israel, Egypt, and the Invention of Paganism

Draw a distinction. . . .
Call it the first distinction.
Call the space in which it is drawn the space severed or cloven by the distinction.[1]

IT SEEMS AS IF GEORGE Spencer Brown's "first Law of Construction" does not apply solely to the logical and mathematical construction for which it is meant. It also applies strangely well to the space of cultural constructions and distinctions and to the spaces that are severed or cloven by such distinctions.

The distinction with which this essay is concerned is the one between true and false in religion: a distinction that underlies the more specific ones between Jews and Gentiles, Christians and pagans, Muslims and unbelievers. Once this distinction is drawn, there is no end of reentries or subdistinctions. We start with Christians and pagans and end up with Catholics and Protestants, Calvinists and Lutherans, Socinians and Latitudinarians, and a thousand similar denominations and subdenominations. These cultural or intellectual distinctions construct a universe that is full not only of meaning, identity, and orientation but also of conflict, intolerance, and violence. Therefore, there have always been attempts to overcome the conflict by reexamining the true-false distinction, albeit at the risk of losing cultural meaning.

Let us call the distinction between true and false in religion the "Mosaic distinction" because tradition ascribes it to Moses. While we cannot be sure that Moses ever lived, since there are no other traces of his earthly existence outside the legendary tradition, we can be sure, on the other hand, that he was not the first to draw the distinction. There was a precursor in the person of the Egyptian king Amenophis IV, who called himself Akhenaten and instituted a monotheistic religion in the fourteenth century B.C.[2] His religion, however, created no lasting tradition and was forgotten immediately after his death. Moses is a figure of memory, but not of history, whereas Akhenaten is a figure of history, but not of memory. Since memory is all that counts in the sphere of cultural distinctions and constructions, we are justified in speaking not of "Akhenaten's distinction" but of the Mosaic distinction. The space severed or cloven by this distinction is the space of Western monotheism. It is the mental and cultural space constructed by this distinction that Europeans have inhabited for nearly two millennia.

This distinction is not as old as religion itself, though at first sight it might seem plausible to say that every religion produces "pagans" just as every civilization generates "barbarians." But cultures and their constructions of identity not only generate otherness but also develop techniques of translation.[3] Of course, the "real other" is always there beyond myself and my constructions of selfhood and otherness. It is the "constructed other" that is, to a certain degree, compensated by techniques of translation. Translation in this sense is not to be confused with the colonializing appropriation of the "real" other. Rather, it is an attempt to make more transparent the borders erected by cultural distinctions.

Ancient polytheisms functioned as such a technique of translation within the "ancient world" as an ecumene of interconnected nations.[4] The polytheistic religions overcame the ethnocentrism of tribal religions by distinguishing several deities by name, shape, and function. The names, the shapes of the gods, and the forms of worship differed. But the functions were strikingly similar, especially in the case of cosmic deities: the sun god of one religion was easily equated to the sun god of another religion, and so forth. In Mesopotamia, the practice of translating divine names goes back to the third millennium. In the second millennium it was extended to many different languages and civilizations of the Near East. Plutarch generalizes, in his treatise on Isis and Osiris, that there are always common cosmic phenomena behind the differing divine names: the sun, the moon, the heaven, the earth, the sea, and so on. Because all people live in the same world, they adore the same gods, the lords of this world:

Nor do we regard the gods as different among different peoples nor as barbarian and Greek and as southern and northern. But just as the sun, moon, heaven, earth and sea are common to all, though they are given various names by the varying peoples, so it is with the one reason (*logos*) which orders these things and the one providence which has charge of them, and the assistant powers which are assigned to everything: they are given different honours and modes of address among different peoples according to custom, and they use hallowed symbols. . . .[5]

The divine names are translatable because they are conventional and because there is always a referent serving as a *tertium comparationis*. The cultures, languages, customs may be different: religions always have a common ground. The gods were international because they were cosmic, and while different peoples worshiped different gods, nobody contested the reality of foreign gods and the legitimacy of foreign forms of worship. The distinction in question did not exist in the world of polytheistic and tribal religions.

The space "severed or cloven" by the Mosaic distinction was not simply the space of religion in general, then, but that of a very specific kind of religion. We may call this a "counterreligion" because it not only constructed but rejected and repudiated everything that went before and everything outside itself as "paganism." It no longer functioned as a means of intercultural translation; on the con-

trary, it functioned as a means of intercultural estrangement. Whereas polytheism or rather, "cosmotheism," rendered different cultures mutually transparent and compatible, the new counterreligion blocked intercultural translatability. False gods cannot be translated.

Usually the fundamental distinction between truth and falsity assumes the form of a "grand narrative" underlying and informing innumerable concrete tellings and retellings of the past. Books 2 through 5 of the Pentateuch unfold the Mosaic distinction in both a narrative and a normative form. Narratively, the distinction is presented in the story of Israel's exodus, whereby Egypt came to represent the rejected, the religiously false, the "pagan." Egypt's most conspicuous property, the worship of images, thus became its greatest sin. Normatively, the distinction is expressed in a code of Law that confirms the narrative by giving the prohibition of "idolatry" first priority. The worship of images comes to be regarded as the absolute horror, falsehood, and apostasy. Polytheism and idolatry, in turn, are seen as one and the same form of religious error: images are "other gods" because the true god is invisible and cannot be iconically represented. The second commandment is hence a commentary on the first:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

The Exodus story, however, is more than simply an account of historical events, and the Law is more than merely a basis for social order and religious purity. In addition to what they overtly tell and establish, they symbolize the Mosaic distinction. Exodus, the Law, Moses, the whole constellation of Israel and Egypt are symbolic figures for all kinds of oppositions.[6] The leading one, however, is the distinction between true religion and idolatry; in the course of Jewish history both the concept of idolatry and the repudiation of it grew stronger. The later the texts, the more elaborate the scorn and abomination they pour over the idolaters. Some poignant verses in Deutero-Isaiah and Ps. 115 develop into whole chapters in the apocryphal *Sapientia Salomonis*, long sections in Philo's *De decalogo* and *De legibus specialibus*, the Mishnaic tractate *Avodah zarah*, and Tertullian's book *De idololatria*.[7]

But the hatred was mutual and the "idolaters" did not fail to strike back. Remarkably enough, most of them were Egyptians.[8] The priest Manetho, for example, who under Ptolemy II wrote a history of Egypt, represented Moses as a rebellious Egyptian priest who made himself the leader of a colony of lepers.[9] Whereas the Jews depicted idolatry as a kind of mental aberration or madness, the Egyptians associated iconoclasm with a very contagious and disfiguring epidemic. The language of illness has been typical of the debate on the Mosaic distinction, from its beginning up to the days of Sigmund Freud. Manetho writes that Moses and his lepers formed an alliance with the Hyksos, the enemies of

Egypt, and tyrannized Egypt for thirteen years. All of the images of the gods were destroyed and the sanctuaries were turned into kitchens where the sacred animals were grilled. We are dealing with a story of mutual abomination: the activities of the iconoclasts are rendered with the same horror as those of the idolaters by the other side. Moses' laws are thus reduced to two:

1. Thou shalt not worship any gods nor refrain from eating their sacred animals.
2. Thou shalt not mingle with people outside thine own group.

In Tacitus, the characterization of Jewish monotheism as a counterreligion is already complete. Moses founded a religion opposed to the rites of other people: the Jews "consider everything that we keep sacred as profane and permit everything that for us is taboo" [profana illic omnia quae apud nos sacra, rursum concessa apud illos quae nobis incesta]. In their temples they consecrate a statue of a donkey and sacrifice a ram *in contumeliam Ammonis*, "in order to ridicule the god Amun." For the same reason, they sacrifice a bull because the Egyptians worship Apis. As the inversion of Egyptian tradition, Jewish religion is totally derivative of and dependent on Egypt.[10]

It is important to realize that we are dealing here with a mutual loathing rooted not in some idiosyncratic aversions between Jews and Egyptians but in the Mosaic distinction that, in its first occurrence, was Akhenaten's distinction. It is true that many arguments of the "idolaters" have lived on in the discourse of anti-Semitism.[11] In this sense, the struggle against the Mosaic distinction had anti-Semitic implications. However, it is also true that many of those (such as John Toland or Gotthold Ephraim Lessing) who in the eighteenth century attacked the distinction fought for tolerance and equality for the Jews; in this sense, the struggle against the Mosaic distinction assumes the character of a struggle against anti-Semitism. The most outspoken destroyer of the Mosaic distinction was, after all, a Jew, Sigmund Freud. Moreover, in the debate between iconoclasts and idolaters, the Christian church sided with the Jews and inherited the repudiation of idolatry by continuing to denigrate pagan religion. Attacks, therefore, against the Mosaic distinction concerned the Christian church as well as Judaism and Islam.[12]

These attacks took the form of a redefinition that attempted to relativize or minimize the distinction. "Normative inversion," which explains one field as just the inverted reflection of its opposing field, is the earliest of these redefinitions. Strangely enough, however, the principle of normative inversion is not only evoked by "pagan" writers who had their reasons to destroy the distinction. It also recurs about a millennium later in the exact center of the Jewish tradition, as an element of Jewish self-definition and self-interpretation. Starting from this surprising reemergence of the principle of normative inversion, the following paragraphs outline some of the more important redefinitions to which the Mosaic

distinction was exposed in the history of Enlightenment from Moses Maimonides to Freud.

Normative Inversion

The principle of normative inversion provides the main method of legal interpretation for Maimonides in his *Guide of the Perplexed*.[13] Maimonides did not speak of Egypt. Instead, he invented a community called the Sabians. It is mentioned twice or three times in the Koran, but nobody knows exactly to which group this text refers.[14] Maimonides' Sabians are an imagined community that he created by applying Manetho's principle of normative inversion in the opposite direction. If the Law prohibits an activity x, this is because the Sabians practiced x; and vice versa, if the Law prescribes an activity y, this is because y was a taboo among the Sabians.

Maimonides—who lived in Egypt and wrote his book in Arabic—had excellent reasons for choosing the Sabians instead of the historically more appropriate ancient Egyptians in his reconstruction of a historical context for Mosaic Law. It is precisely the complete insignificance of the Sabians that serves his purpose. He figures them as a once powerful community that had since fallen into almost complete oblivion. He explains the function of normative inversion as a kind of *"ars oblivionalis"*,[15] a withdrawal therapy for Sabian idolatry, which he understands as a kind of collective or epidemic addiction. The most efficient way to erase a memory is to superimpose a countermemory; hence, the best way to make people forget an idolatrous rite is to replace it with another rite. The Christians followed the same principle when they built their churches on the ruins of pagan temples and observed their feasts on the dates of pagan festivals. For the same reason, Moses (or divine "cunning and wisdom," manifesting itself through his agency)[16] had to install all kinds of dietary and sacrificial prescriptions in order to occupy the terrain held by the Sabians and their idolatrous ways, "so that all these rites and cults that they practiced for the sake of the idols, they now came to practice in the honor of god."[17] The divine strategy was so successful that the Sabians and their once mighty community fell into complete oblivion.

Maimonides was no historian. He was interested in the historical circumstances of the Law only insofar as they elucidated its meaning, that is, the intention of the legislator.[18] He contends that the original intention of the Law was to destroy idolatry and demonstrates this by reconstructing the historical *circumstantiae* of the Sabians. Then he generalizes the crime of idolatry to fit metahistorical problems and arrives at his well-known, purely philosophical, and ahistorical concept of idolatry. For Maimonides, the Law remains enforced, despite its historical circumstances, because of the timeless danger of idolatry.

Translation: Hieroglyphs into Laws

Five hundred years after Maimonides, his project of a historical explanation of the Law was explicitly taken up by the Christian scholar who opens the second section of our story. John Spencer (1630–93) was a scholar of Hebrew and, after 1667, master of Corpus Christi College at Cambridge. In his book on the Ritual Law, Spencer mentions Maimonides always with the greatest admiration.[19] He fully agrees with Maimonides in seeing the principle and overall purpose of the Law as the destruction of idolatry, which he also views as an addiction to be cured by a withdrawal program. He even applies Maimonides' principle of normative inversion in a considerable number of cases. But he deviates from Maimonides in two respects. First, he draws altogether different conclusions from this kind of historical explanation, since he makes his method that of historical, not legal, reasoning. For him, not only the circumstances, but also the intentions or reasons of the Law are historical and belong to the past. Maimonides took the Law's destruction of idolatry to be a timeless (or metahistorical) task; only the circumstances of its first formulation and application were historical. For Spencer, the reason for the Law is historical as well.[20] With the cessation of idolatry, the Law lost its validity and the Mosaic distinction changed its character. This is, of course, the Christian idea of progress.

The second divergence from Maimonides is much more revolutionary and depends on the principle of translation.[21] This paradigm shift shattered the foundation of the Mosaic distinction between true and false in religion. Like Maimonides, Spencer held that God did not inscribe his Law on a tabula rasa but, rather, that he carefully overwrote an existing inscription. Unlike Maimonides, however, Spencer takes this original inscription to be Egyptian rather than Sabian: it is more of an intended subtext, or even a kind of "golden ground," for the Law, than an antitext to be wiped out or covered up. The idea is that God intentionally brought Israel into Egypt in order to give His people an Egyptian foundation, and that He chose Moses as His prophet because he was brought up in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.[22] Moses "translated" a good deal of Egyptian wisdom into his laws and institutions, which can only be explained if reintegrated into their original context. *Translatio* ("transfer," "borrowing") refers not to texts, but to rites and customs that are received from Egypt in order to be preserved as containers of original wisdom, rather than to be supplanted and eventually overcome. Spencer subscribed to the conventional theory about hieroglyphic writing based on Horapollon's two books on hieroglyphs,[23] and especially on Athanasius Kircher's "decipherments."[24] According to this theory, hieroglyphs were iconic symbols that referred to concepts. They were used exclusively for religious purposes, such as transmitting the "mystic" ideas that were to be kept secret from the common people. Similarly, for Spencer, a good many of the laws, rites, and institutions that

God, by the mediation of Moses, gave to his people, show this hieroglyphic character. The Law appears here as a "veil" (velum), a "cover" (involucrum), or a "shell" (cortex) that transmits a truth by hiding it. In this same context, Spencer adduces one of those passages from Clement of Alexandria that become crucial to Karl Leonhard Reinhold's and Friedrich Schiller's view of Egypt:

In adyto veritatis repositum sermonem revera sacrum, Aegyptii quidem per ea, quae apud ipsos vocantur adyta, Hebraei autem per velum significarunt. Occultationem igitur, quod attinet, sunt Hebraïcis similia Aegyptiorum aenigmata.

[The Egyptians indicated the really sacred logos, which they kept in the innermost sanctuary of Truth, by what they called Adyta, and the Hebrews by means of the curtain (in the temple). Therefore, as far as concealment is concerned, the secrets (aenigmata) of the Hebrews and those of the Egyptians are very similar to each other.][25]

These sentences open the door to a totally different understanding of the relationship between Egypt and Israel.

Mystery: Nature into Scripture

At the same time and even at the same place that Spencer did his research on Egyptian rites, Ralph Cudworth, Regius Professor of Hebrew, published his *True Intellectual System of the Universe*.[26] There is every reason to suppose that Spencer and Cudworth knew each other well, but their books are worlds apart. Spencer worked on the Mosaic distinction as a historian. He wanted to show how much is derived from Egypt and, in doing so, he reduced revelation to translation and transcodification. Cudworth was a Cambridge Neoplatonist whose thinking transcended the Mosaic distinction in its biblical expression. His god was the god of the philosophers, and his enemy was not idolatry but atheism or materialism.

Cudworth wants to confute atheism by proving that the recognition of one Supreme Being constitutes "the true intellectual system of the universe" because—as Lord Herbert of Cherbury had already shown in 1624—the notion "that there is a Supreme God" is the most common notion of all.[27] Even atheism conforms with this notion: the god whose existence it negates is precisely this one Supreme God and not one or all of the gods of polytheism. This notion, common to theists and atheists alike, can be defined as: "*A Perfect Conscious Understanding Being* (or Mind) *Existing of it self from Eternity, and the Cause of all other things.*"[28] Especially interesting for our concern is Cudworth's claim that the idea of one Supreme Being is also shared by polytheism. In this context, Egypt becomes important for the simple reason that it was by far the best known polytheistic religion at the time. Even though the hieroglyphs were not yet deciphered and the monuments not yet excavated and published, the body of Greek and Latin sources

(including the Corpus Hermeticum and the writings of Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, and Horapollon, which were believed to be firsthand Egyptian sources) easily outweighed the available information about other religions.

Cudworth distinguishes between self-existing gods and gods whose existence is dependent on other gods. No polytheism, he concludes, ever believed in the existence of several self-existent gods. There is always only one from whom all the other gods derive. Every polytheism thus includes a monotheism. The form of inclusion is mystery or secrecy: polytheism is for the many, while monotheism is for the few. This unequal distribution of knowledge does not follow from some malicious strategy of the priests who wanted to keep their knowledge secret for their *agrandissement*, but from the difficulty of monotheism and the natural differences in mental capabilities. Truth, by this reasoning, is a natural mystery that can only be approached by the very few. Cudworth accordingly reconstructs what he calls the "arcane theology" of ancient Egypt and shows that it is the theology of the One and the All, *hen kai pan*. He takes his evidence from a number of sources, but especially from the Corpus Hermeticum, which he holds to be a late but authentic codification of ancient Egyptian wisdom and theology.

The chapter of Hermes Trismegistus seemed closed once and for all in 1614, when Isaac Casaubon exposed the Corpus Hermeticum as a late compilation and a Christian forgery.[29] Since then, the Hermetic tradition survived only in occult undercurrents such as Rosicrucianism, alchemy, theosophy, and so forth. This, at least, is the picture Frances Yates has drawn of the Hermetic tradition.[30] Indeed, Yates proclaimed the year 1614 "a watershed separating the Renaissance world from the modern world" because Casaubon's dating of the Hermetic texts "shattered the basis of all attempts to build a natural theology in Hermeticism."[31] It was no easy task to vindicate the Corpus Hermeticum against so devastating a verdict. Cudworth, however, did so with such brilliant success (although with not altogether valid arguments), that natural theologies built on the Hermetic texts continued to flourish. Hermes Trismegistus had, in fact, a triumphant comeback in the eighteenth century due to Cudworth's rehabilitation, which inaugurated a new phase of the Hermetic tradition coinciding in Germany with a wave of Spinozism.

Cudworth showed that Casaubon made two mistakes. First, he was wrong in treating the whole corpus as one coherent text. His criticism affected only three of the seventeen independent treatises and his verdict of forgery applied at most to these three, but not to the corpus as a whole. Second, he was wrong in equating text and tradition. The text is late, that much Cudworth is ready to admit. But according to him, this must be taken as a *terminus ad quem* and not *a quo*; the text shows only how long the tradition was alive, not how late it came into being. And even the three "forgeries" must contain a kernel of truth; otherwise they would not have been successful. In this way, Cudworth was able to represent the doctrine

of All-Oneness or *hen kai pan* as the quintessence of Egyptian arcane theology. Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and others initiated into the Egyptian mysteries brought this doctrine to Greece; Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophy transmitted it to the Occident.

Sixty years later, William Warburton, a well-known Shakespeare scholar, an Anglican bishop, and a friend of Alexander Pope, combined the ideas of Spencer and Cudworth in his *Divine legation of Moses*, which appeared in three volumes between 1738 and 1741.[32] Warburton integrated Cudworth's ideas into his reformulation of the Mosaic distinction, which appears now as "mystery" versus "revelation." The truth is present on both sides: quite a revolutionary admission for a bishop. But the Egyptians and all the other religions deriving from Egypt were able to recognize and to transmit this truth only in the form of mystery, that is, as something reserved for the very few who were deemed able to grasp it—not as a permanent possession but as a quality known through rites that were bound to calendaric observances. Moses, on the other hand, made the truth the possession of the whole people and cast it in the form of a permanent Scripture.[33]

Warburton's parallel to Giambattista Vico is striking. Vico, who, like Warburton, wanted to preserve the Mosaic distinction, interpreted it in the terms of sacred and profane history. He asked how profane society and history were possible, and even worked well, when the various Gentile peoples were guided by reason (or "natural law") alone and were not granted the guidance of revelation.[34] Both reason and revelation must therefore contain the truth. Reason, however, was insecure, always endangered by error, and the result of a long and winding process of evolution, whereas revelation was pristine, permanent, and secure. Beyond preserving the Mosaic distinction, though, Vico and Warburton had still another trait in common: their interest was focused on the "pagan" side, profane history and mystery religion. The first step of secularization was not the abolition of the distinction, but a shift of emphasis from the sacred to the profane.

Identity: Jehovah *sive* Isis

The step from mystery to identity might seem slight, because already in the paradigm of *mystery*, the truth is recognized on both sides of the Mosaic distinction. The new paradigm of identity does not claim that there is revelation on both sides, but that there is secrecy on both sides. Secrecy persists; even Moses did not reveal the full truth. Hence Lessing's idea of universal freemasonry: there have always been a few initiates or illuminates who sought the truth, which could be uncovered even after Moses' revelation, but only through a secret quest.[35] The truth is the same on both sides, but it is the possession of no one.

Karl Leonhard Reinhold published his book on *The Hebrew Mysteries, or the*

Oldest Freemasonry first in 1786 in two issues of the *Journal für Freymaurer* and then as a monograph in 1788 at Leipzig.[36] At the age of 25, he entered the famous Viennese lodge *True Concord* (1783). Still a Jesuit, he passed all three grades but fled in the same year from the Jesuit order to Leipzig, where he continued his philosophical studies. He married a daughter of Christoph Martin Wieland, joined him in editing the journal *Teutscher Merkur*, became well known for his *Letters on Kant's Philosophy*, and was appointed professor of philosophy at Jena in 1787. There he befriended Schiller, whom he induced to read Immanuel Kant.[37]

In his book on the Hebrew mysteries, Reinhold identifies the God of the Bible as Isis, the Egyptian Supreme Being, by comparing God's self-presentation in Exodus 3.14 ("I am who I am") and Isis's self-presentation on the veiled image at Sais: "Brethren!" Reinhold exclaims, "Who among us does not know the ancient Egyptian inscriptions: the one on the pyramid at Sais: 'I am all that is, was, and will be, and no mortal has ever lifted my veil,' and that other on the statue of Isis: 'I am all that is'? Who among us does not understand as well as the ancient Egyptian initiate himself did the meaning of these words and does not know that they express the essential Being, the meaning of the name Jehova?"[38] While the saitic inscription is reported by Plutarch and (in a slightly different, thus independent, version) by Proclus, they speak only of one such inscription. The second one was probably invented by Voltaire, whom Reinhold is closely paraphrasing in this passage.[39] It serves Reinhold's purpose because it makes the equation more striking: "I am *all that is*" and "I am *who I am*."

The equation, however, does not seem so convincing to us. On the contrary, one proposition negates the other. When Isis says "I am all that is," she identifies herself with the world and abolishes the distinction between God and world. When Yahveh says "I am who I am," he explicitly draws the distinction between himself and the world and forecloses every link of identification. But Reinhold read the Bible in Greek. The Septuagint renders the divine name as "*Egō eimi ho ōn*" [I am the Being one], which Reinhold understands (and which has always been understood) as meaning "I am essential Being."[40] Reinhold was, in fact, following an antique tradition; in one of the so-called Sibyllinian Oracles, the biblical God, with his self-presentation "I am who I am" ['*æhjæh 'asher 'æhjæh*], is interpreted in the sense of the cosmic God of the Hermetists: "I am the being one (*eimi d'egōge ho ōn*), recognize this in your spirit: I donned heaven as my garment, I clothed myself with the ocean, the earth is ground for my feet, air covers me as my body and the stars revolve around me."[41]

This is already Isis. But the point that Reinhold wants to make is that the true God has no names, neither "Jehovah" nor "Isis." Both the saitic formula and the Hebrew formula are to be understood not as the revelation of a name, but rather as its witholding, or as the *revelation of anonymity*. God is all; every name falls short because it distinguishes God from something that is not God. Being all, God can-

not have a name. With this, we come back to Hermes Trismegistus. The pertinent fragment is preserved in Lactantius. Nicholas of Cusa quotes this passage in *De docta ignorantia* some decades before Marsilio Ficino's edition of the Hermetica:

It is obvious that no name can be appropriate to the Greatest One, because nothing can be distinguished from him. All names are imposed by distinguishing one from the other. Where all is one, there cannot be a proper name. Therefore, Hermes Trismegistus is right in saying: "because God is the totality of things [*universitas rerum*], he has no proper name, otherwise he should be called by every name or everything should bear his name. For he comprises in his simplicity the totality of all things. Conforming with his proper name— which for us is deemed ineffable and which is the tetragrammaton . . . —his name should be interpreted as 'one and all' or 'all in one,' which is even better [*'unus et omnia' sive 'omnia uniter,' quod melius est*]."[42]

In this text, written in the middle of the fifteenth century, we already find the equation of the Hebrew tetragrammaton with Hermes Trismegistus's anonymous god, who is *unus et omnia*, "One and All," or *hen kai pan*, as this idea will be referred to by Cudworth and Lessing.

Nil novi sub sole? It is true that we will find most of the leading ideas of the eighteenth century concerning the Mosaic distinction, nature and revelation, truth and religious tolerance, already present in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But we are not asking for first occurrences. The point is that these ideas did not disappear in the seventeenth century, as is generally believed. Although the seventeenth century was an age of orthodoxy that destroyed the harmonistic and eclectic dreams of the Renaissance, and although most of this period's religious and philosophical movements went occult or disappeared under the persecution of orthodox censorship, Spencer's, Gerardus Vossius's (1577–1649),[43] John Marsham's (1602–85),[44] and Cudworth's reinventions of Egypt led to a strong and mostly unknown revival of Hermeticism, pantheism, and other forms of Egyptophilia. These rehabilitations of the Egyptian tradition, furthermore, had the immense advantage of answering orthodox and historical criticism.

The enlightened Egyptophilia of the eighteenth century reached its climax around 1780 when it merged with the ideas of *nature* and the *sublime*. During these years Lamoignon des Malesherbes coined the term *cosmotheism* to describe the Stoic worship of cosmos as a god. Cosmotheism more or less explicitly abolishes the distinction between God and world. Friedrich Jacobi applied it to Benedict Spinoza's *deus sive natura* and Lessing's *hen kai pan*,[45] a formula that Cudworth (1678) had shown to be the quintessential expression of ancient Egyptian theology. The ancient Egyptians were thus cosmotheists just as the Stoics, the Neoplatonists, the Spinozists were. This idea, always present, returned in the years between 1785 and 1790 with an overwhelming force.

In this new cosmotheistic movement, Isis was generally interpreted as "Nature." Here is how Ignaz von Born, the Grand Master of *True Concord* and the

model of Sarastro in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Magic Flute*, summarized the ultimate aim of the Egyptian mysteries and of freemasonry:

The knowledge of nature is the ultimate purpose of our application. We worship this progenitor, nourisher, and preserver of all creation in the image of Isis. Only he who knows the whole extent of her power and force will be able to uncover her veil without punishment.[46]

This passage combines Plutarch with Clement of Alexandria, who says: "The doctrines delivered in the Greater Mysteries concern the universe. Here all instruction ends. Things are seen as they are; and Nature, and the workings of Nature, are to be seen and comprehended."[47] On the last step of initiation, the adept is speechless in the face of nature. This idea inspired Schiller's ballad "The Veiled Image at Sais" and his essay "The Legation of Moses."[48] Like Warburton and Reinhold, Schiller constructed the Mosaic distinction as the antagonistic relationship between official religion and mystery cult. In his opinion, secrecy was necessary to protect both the political order from a possibly dangerous truth and the truth from vulgar abuse and misunderstanding. For this reason, hieroglyphic writing and a complex ritual of cultic ceremonies and prescriptions were invented to shield the mysteries. They were devised to create a "sensual solemnity" (*sinnliche Feierlichkeit*) and to prepare, by emotional arousal, the soul of the initiate to receive the truth.

At this point Schiller introduced the notion of the "sublime," associating it with the Hermetic idea of God's namelessness: "Nothing is more sublime than the simple greatness with which the sages speak of the creator. In order to distinguish him in a truly defining form, they refrained from giving him a name at all."[49]

Appearing in the same year (1790), Kant's *Kritik der Urteilskraft* associates the idea of the sublime with the second commandment, that is, with the idea of God's imagelessness: "There is perhaps no more sublime passage in the law-code of the Jews than the commandment 'thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . .'"[50] But in a footnote Kant mentions the veiled image at Sais and its inscription as the highest expression of the sublime:

Perhaps nothing more sublime was ever said or no sublimer thought ever expressed than the famous inscription on the temple of Isis (mother nature): "I am all that is and that shall be, and no mortal has lifted my veil." Segner availed himself of this idea in a *suggestive* vignette prefixed to his *Natural Philosophy*, in order to inspire beforehand the apprentice whom he was about to lead into the temple with a holy awe, which should dispose his mind to solemn attention.[51]

Kant uses Schiller's language of initiation in describing Segner's vignette: "holy awe" (*heiliger Schauer*), "solemn attention" (*feierliche Aufmerksamkeit*). The main point of Kant's observation is to emphasize the initiatory function of the sublime. The sublime inspires in humans a holy awe and terror that only the

strongest are able to withstand, so as to prepare soul and mind for the apprehension of a truth that can be grasped only in a state of exceptional fear and attention. Sublime secrets require a sublime environment. The connection of the sublime with wisdom, mystery, and initiation occurs again and again in the literature on the Egyptian mysteries.[52] But I would like to quote a text to which Carlo Ginzburg drew my attention: the *Athenian Letters*, anonymously published in London (1741–43). The following is a description of the "Hermetic cave" at Thebes, where the Egyptian initiates were supposed to be taught the doctrines of Hermes Trismegistus as inscribed on the pillars of wisdom:

> The strange solemnity of the place must strike everyone, that enters it, with a religious horror; and is the most proper to work you up into that frame of mind, in which you will receive, with the most awful reverence and assent, whatever the priest, who attends you, is pleased to reveal. . . .
>
> Towards the farther end of the cave, or within the innermost recess of some prodigious caverns, that run beyond it, you hear, as it were a great way off, a noise resembling the distant roarings of the sea, and sometimes like the fall of waters, dashing against rocks with great impetuosity. The noise is supposed to be so stunning and frightful, if you approach it, that few, they say, are inquisitive enough, into those mysterious sportings of nature. . . .
>
> Surrounded with these pillars of lamps are each of those venerable columns, which I am now to speak of, inscribed with the hieroglyphical letters with the primeval mysteries of the Egyptian learning. . . . From these pillars, and the sacred books, they maintain, that all the philosophy and learning of the world has been derived.[53]

This is the proper setting for the storage and transmission of secret wisdom. The more well-to-do among the Freemasons of the time even tried to construct such an ambiance in their parks and gardens. The scenography for the trial by fire and water in the finale from the second act of Mozart's *Magic Flute* envisages such a cave, where water gushes out with a deafening roar and fire spurts forth with devouring tongues. It is modeled not only upon Abbé Terrasson's description of Sethos's subterranean trials and initiation but also upon masonic garden architecture, such as the grotto in the park at Aigen, near Salzburg, owned by Mozart's friend and fellow mason, Basil von Amann.[54] The idea of the sublime—so important for the aesthetics of the time—and the interpretation of ancient Egyptian art and architecture were practically inseparable from notions of mystery and initiation.

According to Reinhold and Schiller, nature was the god in whose mysteries Moses was initiated during the course of his Egyptian education. But this was not the God Moses revealed to his people. In the school of the Egyptian mysteries, Moses not only learned to contemplate the truth but also "collected a treasure of hieroglyphs, mystical symbols and ceremonies" with which to build up a religion and to cover the truth under the protective shell of cultic institutions and prescriptions—*sub cortice legis*, as Spencer had already formulated it. Schiller replaced Maimonides' and Spencer's idea of God's accommodation of the Law with the idea

of Moses' accommodation of God. Religion and revelation, in this scheme, are only forms of accommodation.

Among the readers of Schiller's essay was Ludwig van Beethoven, who wrote out the two "saitic inscriptions" and a quotation from the Orphic hymn on a leaf of paper and had this put under glass and in a frame. It stood on his writing table during the last years of his life:

> I am all that is.
> I am all that was, is, and will be; and no mortal has ever lifted my veil.
> He is the One who exists by himself, and to this single One all things owe their existence.[55]

These sentences were held to be quintessential expressions of enlightened religion and, at the same time, of ancient Egyptian wisdom and theology. Equally emblematic of Egyptian theology was the Greek formula *hen kai pan* that Lessing wrote as his personal religious manifesto in the guest-book of a friend on 15 August 1780.[56] When Jacobi published his conversations with Lessing in 1785, he launched the "pantheism debate" that held sway in Germany for almost fifty years.[57] Cudworth could have launched the same debate a hundred years earlier. But it was only on the eve of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt that the return of Egyptian cosmotheism and the abolition of the Mosaic distinction assumed the dimensions of a sweeping revolution. One might call it the "return of the repressed."

Latency, or the Return of the Repressed

Sigmund Freud was another reader of Schiller's essay. Its impact on his *Moses and Monotheism* is evident.[58] But for all the still-growing literature on this book, nobody seems to notice that Freud's work on the Mosaic distinction continues the discourse of the eighteenth century.[59] It is, of course, important to read Freud's book in the context of his other scientific writings. Nevertheless, the full import of the book only becomes clear when seen in the context of the Enlightenment tradition.[60] When, under the pressure of German anti-Semitism, Freud started to write his book, remarkably enough, he did not ask "how the Germans came to murder the Jews," but "how the Jews came to attract this undying hatred." He sought the answer in the Mosaic distinction and in Moses himself, who, by drawing this distinction, Freud believed had created the Jews. Freud's project was thus to dissolve or "deconstruct" the Mosaic distinction by historical analysis: precisely the project of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Freud's Moses was an Egyptian who brought to the Jews an Egyptian religion. Every attempt, how-

ever, to abolish the Mosaic distinction had similarly focused on the Egyptian background of Moses. Already in 1709, John Toland, basing himself on Strabo, even went so far as to make Moses an Egyptian and the prince of the province of Goshen, who founded a new religion in the spirit of Spinoza, and left Egypt together with the Hebrews in order to realize it.[61]

When Freud resumed, in the 1930s, the discourse on Moses and Egypt, he was able to avail himself of an archaeological discovery that was inaccessible to all previous authors from Manetho to Schiller: that is, the discovery of Akhenaten and his monotheistic revolution. He was spared the trouble of inventing Egyptian mysteries in order to project Hermetic or Spinozistic theology back into Moses' times, and instead could point to an Egyptian monotheistic counterreligion as a historical fact. But even in his reconstruction secrecy returns, namely, in the form of latency. Freud's Moses did not translate or accommodate his truth to the capacities of the people but imposed it without compromise. Therefore he was murdered. Yet it was precisely by being murdered and by becoming a traumatic and encrypted memory that he was able to create the Jewish people. This creation was a slow process, taking centuries and even millennia. His truth worked from within and manifested itself as a return of the repressed. In Freud's words, it "must first have undergone the fate of being repressed, the condition of lingering in the unconscious, before it is able to display such powerful effects on its return and force the masses under its spell."[62] In this way, Moses the Egyptian and his monotheism "returned to the memory of his people." This repression is how Freud explains the coercive power that religion has over the masses. For Freud, religion is a compulsory neurosis that can only be treated by "remembering, repeating, working through" Freud's version of Baal Shem Tov's famous sentence: the secret of redemption is remembering. In the case of the Mosaic distinction, this remembering has always turned toward Egypt.

In this situation, it may be important to rediscover the Egypt of the eighteenth century repressed by nineteenth-century positivism and historicism—just as the Egypt of the Renaissance had been rediscovered by the eighteenth century after a period of suppression, and as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries rediscovered *prisca theologia* in the Egypt (and its syncretistic cosmotheism) of late antiquity. The eighteenth century reopened a dialogue with an ancient Egyptian (or generally "pagan") cosmotheism that had been suppressed by orthodox and rationalistic fundamentalism. In the nineteenth century, this dialogue was again, and apparently forever, brought to an end by the decipherment of hieroglyphic writing and the rise of modern Egyptology, which relegated all Egyptophilic ideas to the museum of inventions and misunderstandings. Only recently has it become clear that there is a genuine Egyptian cosmotheistic tradition that has been opposed by the Mosaic distinction but has persisted as a countercurrent through all the different stages of Western monotheism until the eighteenth century and be-

yond. Those who referred to ancient Egypt in combating orthodox and fundamentalist distinctions were not completely mistaken. And many of those who engaged in the project of a scientific discovery of ancient Egypt and who opposed Egyptophilic traditions were ultimately, and more or less unwittingly, following the same agenda of natural religion and reason. It is always good to remember.

Perhaps, however, this remembrance is not, after all, "the secret of redemption," but rather a technique of translation. I think that our aim cannot be to abolish distinctions and to deconstruct the spaces that were severed or cloven by them. What we need instead is the development of new techniques of intercultural translation, not in order to appropriate "the other," but to overcome the stereotypes of otherness that we have projected onto the other by drawing distinctions. We are no longer dreaming of returning to Egypt or to the eighteenth century, with its ideas of tolerance. While this concept of tolerance was based on integration or generalization, what we need is a tolerance of recognition, which depends upon what is still beyond our reach: a real understanding of those religions that were rejected as "idolatry" by the Mosaic distinction.

Notes

The following essay is based on research completed during my stay at the J. Paul Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities at Santa Monica in 1994–95. The results of this research will be published in a book titled *Moses the Egyptian: An Essay in Mnemohistory*, forthcoming from Harvard University Press.

1. George Spencer Brown, *Laws of Form* (New York, 1972), 3.
2. See, e.g., Erik Hornung, *Echnaton: Die Religion des Lichtes* (Zürich, 1995); Jan Assmann, "Akhanyati's Theology of Time and Light," *Israel Academy of Sciences and the Humanities, Proceedings* 7 (1992): 143–76.
3. See, e.g., Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, eds., *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between* (Stanford, 1996).
4. Peter Artzi, "The Birth of the Middle East," *Proceedings of the 5th World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, 1972), 120–24. For polytheism, see my contribution, "Translating Gods: Religion as a Factor of Cultural (Un)translatability," in Budick and Iser, *Translatability*, 25–36.
5. Plutarch, *De Iside and Osiride*, trans. J. G. Griffiths (Cardiff, 1970), 223 f.
6. See Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution* (New York, 1985).
7. See Moshe Barasch, *Icon: Studies in the History of an Idea* (New York, 1992); Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993).
8. The sources have been collected by Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1974–1984).
9. W. G. Waddell, ed. and trans., *Manetho* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940).
10. Stern, *Jews and Judaism*, 2:17–63. A. M. A. Hospers-Jansen, *Tacitus over de Joden* (Gröningen, 1949); Heinz Heinen, "Ägyptische Grundlagen des antiken Antijudaismus:

Zum Judenexkurs des Tacitus, Historien V. 2–13," *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 101, no. 2 (1992): 124–49.

11. See, e.g., John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1983); Pier Cesare Bori, "Immagini e stereotipi del popolo ebraico nel mondo antico: asino d'oro, vitello d'oro," in *L'estasi del profeta* (Bologna, 1989), 131–50 (with rich bibliography). For the polemical impact of this tradition, see especially Peter Schäfer, *Judaeophobia: The Attitude Towards the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).

12. See Silvia Berti, *Il trattato dei tre impostori: La vita e lo spirito del signor Benedetto de Spinoza* (Turin, 1994).

13. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, 1963). Spencer quotes Maimonides in Hebrew and only occasionally in the original Arabic.

14. Koran 2.59, see also 5.73 and 22.17. Some thought of the Mandaeans or a similar movement; Amos Funkenstein sees in them the "small remnants of a gnostic sect of the second or third century A.D.; see his *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley, 1993), 144. From A.D. 830 on, the term refers to the people at Harran who had managed to remain pagans and who still adhered to the cult of Sin, the Mesopotamian moon god. Threatened by persecution, they claimed to be Sabians, and referred to the Hermetic writings as their sacred book; see Walter Scott, ed. and trans., *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings Which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus* (1929; reprint, Boston, 1993), 97–108. In the seventeenth century, the Sabians were generally identified with the Zoroastrians; see, e.g., Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines sacrae, or a rational account of the grounds of Christian faith, as to the truth and divine authority of the scriptures, and the matters therein contained* (1662; reprint, Oxford, 1797), 1:49–51. Theophile Gale held that "the Rites of the Zabii are the same with those of the Chaldaeans and Persians, who all agreed in this worship of the Sun, and of Fire, &c."; see *The Court of the Gentiles*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1669–71), 2:73.

15. Umberto Eco, "An *Ars Oblivionalis?* Forget It!" *PMLA* 103 (1988): 254–61. Umberto Eco might be right in postulating that there is no possible art of oblivion on the level of individual memory. But Eco's arguments do not apply on the level of collective memory.

16. *Talattuf alallah wahakhmatah*, "the cunning (or 'practical reason') of God and his wisdom," an expression that Funkenstein very interestingly links with Hegel's concept of "the cunning of reason"; see Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 141–44, esp. 143 n. 38, referring to Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*; and G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie der Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 1961), 78 ff. John Spencer speaks of God's using "honest fallacies and tortuous steps," *methodis honeste fallacibus et sinuosis gradibus*, quoted after Gotthard Victor Lechler, *Geschichte des englischen Deismus* (1841; reprint, Hildesheim, 1965), 138.

17. *Ut omnes isti cultus aut ritus, qui fiebant in gratiam imaginum, fierent in honorem Dei*: Spencer's translation of Rabbi Shem Tov ben Joseph ibn Shem Tov's commentary on Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*.

18. He was following a principle of Roman legal exegesis. The Romans studied the historical *circumstantiae* of a law with the same purpose of finding out about its original intention. The second step then was to generalize the intention in such a way that it could be applied to the case in point. History was studied in order to save the law, not to abolish it. A law was saved by generalizing the original intention, or the set of facts to which it was originally applied, and by finding out their timeless relevance. This is also the method of Maimonides.

19. John Spencer, *De legibus hebraeorum ritualibus et earum rationibus, libri tres* (The Hague, 1686).

20. Spencer speaks of the cessation of the reason of the Law, *De legibus*, 3:12: *"(Christus) Mosis Leges, earum ratione iam cessante, penitus abrogaverit* [{Christ} abolished the Law of Moses, because its reason had become inexistent].

21. *Translatio* in Latin means "transfer," not "interpretation." Spencer conceives of a "translatio Legis" on the model of "translatio imperii" and "translatio studii." Yet "transfer" implies, of course, interpretation. Besides *translatio*, Spencer uses *mutatio*, "borrowing," and *derivatio*, "derivation."

22. Acts 7.22. Note that this information about Moses is given only in the New Testament. It never occurs in the Hebrew Bible.

23. George Boas, *The Hieroglyphics of Horapollo* (New York, 1950); Erik Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs* (Copenhagen, 1961), 47–49.

24. On Athanasius Kircher, see Liselotte Dieckmann, *Hieroglyphics: The History of a Literary Symbol* (St. Louis, 1970); Iversen, *Myth of Egypt*, 92–100.

25. Spencer combines two distant passages from Clement's *Stromata* (5.3.19.3 and 5.4.41.2); see Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata Buch 1–6*, ed. Otto Stählin (Berlin, 1985), 338, 354.

26. Ralph Cudworth, *The true Intellectual System of the Universe: the first part, wherein All the Reason and Philosophy of Atheism is confuted and its Impossibility demonstrated* (1678; reprint, London, 1743).

27. Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, *De veritate* (Paris, 1624).

28. Cudworth, *Intellectual System*, 195.

29. Isaac Casaubon, *De rebus sacris et ecclesiasticis exercitationes XVI. Ad Cardinalis Baronii prolegomena in annales* (London, 1614).

30. Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago, 1964).

31. Ibid., 398.

32. William Warburton, *The divine legation of Moses demonstrated on the principles of a religious deist, from the omission of the doctrine of a future state of reward and punishment in the Jewish dispensation*, 2 vols. (1738–41; reprint, London, 1778).

33. For this interesting theory of writing, Warburton refers to Flavius Josephus as his source: "[Josephus] tells Appion (*sic*) that that high and sublime knowledge, which the Gentiles with difficulty attained unto, in the rare and temporary celebration of their *Mysteries*, was habitually taught to the Jews, at all times." See Warburton, *Divine legation*, 1:192–93.

34. See also John Selden's distinction between *"ius naturale"* (the Noahidic laws) and *"disciplina Hebraeorum"*; John Selden, *De iure naturali et gentium iuxta disciplinam hebraeorum libri septem* (London, 1640); Friedrich Niewöhner, *Veritas sive Varietas: Lessings Toleranzparabel und das Buch von den drei Betrügern* (Heidelberg, 1988), 333–36. The discovery of the "natural law" of nations is the object of Giambattista Vico's "new science." Vico mentions Hugo Grotius, John Selden, and Samuel Pufendorf as the leading theorists of natural law. See Leon Pompa, ed. and trans., *Vico: Selected Writings* (Cambridge, 1982), 81–89.

35. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Ernst und Falk: Freimaurergespräche" [1778], in *Gesammelte Werke* (Leipzig, 1841), 9:345–91.

36. Karl Leonhard Reinhold [Br(uder) Decius, pseud.], *Die Hebräischen Mysterien, oder die älteste religiöse Freymaurerey* (Leipzig, 1788).

37. On Reinhold, see Gerhard W. Fuchs, *Karl Leonhard Reinhold, Illuminat und Philosoph: eine Studie über den Zusammenhang seines Engagements als Freimaurer und Illuminat mit seinem Leben und philosophischen Wirken* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994) where, however, Reinhold's book on the Hebrew mysteries is not mentioned.

38. Reinhold, *Hebräischen Mysterien*, 54.

39. Voltaire, *Essay sur le moeurs des peuples*, in *Oeuvres de Voltaire*, ed. M. Beuchot (Paris, 1829), 15:102–106; "Il se serait fondé sur l'ancienne inscription de la statue d'Isis, 'Je suis ce qui est'; et cette autre, 'Je suis tout ce qui a été et qui sera; nul mortel ne pourra lever mon voile'" (103).

40. Vico also paraphrases the divine name as "what I am" *and* "what is"; Vico, *Selected Writings*, 53 (*On the Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, chap. 2).

41. R. Merkelbach and M. Totti, *Abrasax: Ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen Inhalts* (Opladen, 1991), 2:131.

42. Nicolaus Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia*, ed. Paulus Wilpert (Hamburg, 1967), 96–97. Bernhardine von Olfen and Aleida Assmann drew my attention to this important text.

43. Gerardus Joannis Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia christiana: sive de origine ac progressu idololatriae, ad veterum gesta, ac rerum naturam, reductae; deque naturae mirandis, quibus homo adducitur ad Deum* (Francfort, 1668).

44. John Marsham, *Canon chronicus aegyptiacus, hebraicus, graecus* (London, 1672).

45. Emmanuel J. Bauer, *Das Denken Spinozas und seine Interpretation durch Jacobi* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), 234 ff.

46. Ignaz von Born, "Über die Mysterien der Aegyptier," *Journal für Freymaurer* 1 (1784): 17–132, esp. 22. He quotes Plutarch as his source.

47. Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, cited in Warburton, *Divine legation*, 1:191.

48. Friedrich Schiller, *Die Sendung Moses*, ed. H. Koopmann, *Sämtliche Werke IV: Historische Schriften* (Munich, 1968), 737–57.

49. Nichts ist erhabener, als die einfache Größe, mit der sie von dem Weltschöpfer sprachen. Um ihn auf eine recht entscheidende Art auszuzeichnen, gaben sie ihm gar keinen Namen; Schiller, *Die Sendung Moses*, 745.

50. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. M. Bernard (New York, 1951), 115. Translation altered slightly after Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* in *Werke*, ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt, 1968), 8:417.

51. Ibid., 160. The German reads: "Vielleicht ist nie etwas Erhaberenes gesagt oder ein Gedanke erhabener ausgedrückt worden als in jener Aufschrift über dem Tempel der Isis (der Mutter Natur): 'Ich bin alles was da ist, was da war und was da sein wird, und meinen Schleier hat kein Sterblicher aufgedeckt.' Segner benutzte diese Idee, durch eine sinnreiche, seiner Naturlehre vorgesetzte Vignette, um seinen Lehrling, den er in diesen Tempel einzuführen bereit war, vorher mit dem heiligen Schauer zu erfüllen, der das Gemüth zu feierlicher Aufmerksamkeit stimmen soll."

52. See, e.g., Abbé Jean Terrasson, *Séthos. Histoire ou vie, tirée des monuments, Anecdotes de l'ancienne Égypte; Ouvrage dans lequel on trouve la description des Initiations aux Mystères Égyptiens, traduit d'un manuscrit Grec* (1731; reprint, Paris, 1767).

53. *Athenian letters or, the Epistolary Correspondence of an Agent of the King of Persia, residing at Athens during the Peloponnesian war. Containing the History of the Times, in Dispatches to the Ministers of State at the Persian Court. Besides Letters on various subjects between Him and His Friends*, 4 vols. (London, 1741–43), 1:95–100 (letter 25 by Orsames, from Thebes). Carlo Ginzburg drew my attention to this extraordinary history of the Eastern Mediterranean at the end of the fifth century B.C. The letters by Orsames add up to a fair summary of the knowledge of the time concerning Ancient Egypt.

54. Magnus Olausson, "Freemasonry, Occultism, and the Picturesque Garden Towards the End of the Eighteenth Century," *Art History* 8, no. 4 (1985): 413–33. I owe this to Annette Richards.

55. See Anton F. Schindler, *The Life of Beethoven*, ed. and trans. Ignace Moscheles (Mattapan, Mass., 1966), 2:163:

> If my observation entitles me to form an opinion on the subject, I should say he [Beethoven] inclined to Deism; in so far as that term may be understood to imply natural religion. He had written with his own hand two inscriptions, said to be taken from a temple of Isis. These inscriptions, which were framed, and for many years constantly lay before him on his writing-table, were as follows:—
>
> I. "I AM THAT WHICH IS.—I AM ALL THAT IS, ALL THAT WAS, AND ALL THAT SHALL BE.—NO MORTAL MAN HATH MY VEIL UPLIFTED!"
> II. "HE IS ONE; SELF-EXISTENT, AND TO THAT ONE ALL THINGS OWE THEIR EXISTENCE."

Beethoven's German text is shown in facsimile and reads: "Ich bin, was da ist // Ich bin alles, was ist, was war, und was seyn wird, kein sterblicher Mensch hat meinen Schleyer aufgehoben // Er ist einzig von ihm selbst, u. diesem Einzigen sind alle Dinge ihr Daseyn schuldig." The sentences are separated from each other by double slashes. The third seems to have been added later; the writing is smaller and more developed. See also E. Graefe, "Beethoven und die ägyptische Weisheit," *Göttinger Miszellen* 2 (1971): 19–21.

56. The inscription, which is now lost, has been seen by Johann Gottfried von Herder; see Erich Schmidt, *Lessing: Geschichte seines Lebens und seiner Schriften*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1884–86), 2:804; *Gotthold Ephraim Lessings Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Karl Lachmann, vol. 22, bk. 1 (Berlin, 1915), ix; Karl Christ, *Jacobi und Mendelssohn: Eine Analyse des Spinozastreits* (Würzburg, 1988), 59 f.

57. See Gérard Vallée et al., trans., *The Spinoza Conversations Between Lessing and Jacobi: Texts with Excerpts from the Ensuing Controversy* (Lanham, Md., 1988).

58. Sigmund Freud, *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion* (1939), vol. 16, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Anna Freud (Frankfurt am Main, 1968); in English: *Moses and Monotheism*, in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 23, trans. James Strachey (London, 1959). E. Blum, "Über Sigmund Freuds: Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion," *Psyche* 10 (1956–57): 367–90, holds that Freud knew Schiller's text, even if he does not mention it (375). See Yozef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, 1991), 114 n. 17.

59. See Brigitte Stemberger, "'Der Mann Moses' in Freuds Gesamtwerk," *Kairos* 16 (1974): 161–225; Marthe Robert, *D'Oedipe à Moise: Freud et la conscience juive* (Paris, 1974); E. Amado Levy-Valensi, *Le Moise de Freud ou la référence occultée* (Monaco, 1984); Pier Cesare Bori, "Il Mosè di Freud: Per una prima valutazione storico-critica," in *L'estasi*, 179–222, esp. 179–84; Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, *Freuds Moses-Studie als Tagtraum* (Weinheim, 1991); Emanuel Rice, *Freud and Moses: The Long Journey Home* (New York, 1990); Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses*; Bluma Goldstein, *Reinscribing Moses: Heine, Kafka, Freud, and Schoenberg in a European Wilderness* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); Carl E. Schorske, "Freud's Egyptian Dig," *New York Review of Books*, 27 May 1993, 35–40; P.C. Bori, "Moses, the Great Stranger," in *From Hermeneutics to Ethical Consensus Among Cultures* (Atlanta, 1994), 155–64.

60. See Peter Gay, "The Last Philosophe: Our God Logos," in *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven, 1987), 33–68.

61. John Toland, *Adeisidaemon sive Titus Livius a superstione vindicatus* (Hagae-Comitis, 1709), 99–199.

62. Freud, *Standard Edition*, 23:101.